

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JUNE 2010

FOUR DOLLARS



A Tangier Narrative • Crayfish as Bioindicators • Minnow Matching





## Bob Duncan Executive Director



**P**artnerships have always been the necessary lynchpin of success in the conservation community. And in Virginia, we have leaned on this approach for the betterment of wildlife since the earliest days of governance. While nothing new, I'd suggest that we are still making history.

A cooperative management agreement we signed with the U.S. Forest Service in 1938 served as a model for other wildlife agencies across the country. Over the decades, we have partnered closely with state parks, state forests, and many Virginia universities. Federal and state partners have also included the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Virginia Native Plant Society, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology, among others. And, of course, our longstanding working relationships with such 'traditional' partners as the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia, Ducks Unlimited, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Virginia Waterfowlers Association, Trout Unlimited, and the Virginia Deer Hunters Association remain the bedrock of our collaborative approach to stewarding wildlife.

Looking at the big picture, alliances with land management agencies such as the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Virginia Dept. of Forestry remain vibrant. Such relationships are key to the protection of critical wildlife habitat. More recent alliances have leaned on the generosity of private and public landowners to secure

necessary access for our statewide birding and wildlife trail system.

Partnerships have not been limited to public entities, of course, nor have they been limited to Virginia. Quite recently we have worked on a cooperative agreement with Tennessee to create a reciprocal fishing license on the South

Holston Reservoir. With technical support from our hatcheries, we've begun stocking white bass and trout. The work illustrates how much can be accomplished in a short period of time when people come together over a shared vision.

And we could never cover the breadth of our mission without the support of corporations and grassroots organizations. Our partnership with the Prince William Conservation Alliance serves as a prime example. More recently, the Friends of the Chickahominy has been instrumental to a new volunteer effort aimed at broadening uses on our Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area—which we hope will serve as a model for other WMA holdings.

Working closely with others keeps our agency fresh and nimble, I like to think, as we try new approaches and make new friends in the process. These partnerships have enhanced our capacity to serve you, the outdoors men and women of Virginia. Such relationships make it possible to do the work you want to see done. They also remind us that there are many ways to accomplish our objectives.

### Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing; To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

*Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources*

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
Bob McDonnell, Governor

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Photograph ©Dwight Dyke

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# The Waterman

## A way of living. A way of life.

by Tee Clarkson

**J**eff Crockett pulls his boat out from Cockrell's Deli in Reedville just as the sun drops below the horizon. It is October 2nd, a transitional period in the year of Tangier Island's watermen. The peeler crab season is coming to an end and the commercial rockfish season will soon get underway. Jeff's days as a fulltime waterman on Tangier are behind him, courtesy primarily of a bad back, but he still runs nets for rockfish in the spring and fall and guides duck hunters in the winter. Like many of his contemporaries, he left the crabbing grounds and the nets for life as a tugboat operator to the north. He works the typical tugger's schedule of two weeks on and two weeks off, which allows him at least half the year on the island. Jeff is a direct descendant of John Wesley Crockett, the original owner of Tangier, and like many of his relatives before, he has lived on the island all his life.

He gives it a little gas as we pass the menhaden factory at the mouth of the creek leading out into the bay. The smokestack sends the stench of burning fish oil onto the breeze. I try my best not to breathe, but it is no use of course. In a few minutes we are past it and into the bay, heading east. The light glows red, orange, and yel-

low in the wake behind the boat. We pass several menhaden boats on their way to unload their catch. It's a Thursday evening. There are no recreational boats out, just those that make their living out here. It's dark when we finally pull up to the dock on Tangier an hour later. I load my gear onto a golf cart (there are only a



©Emily Wallace





©Emily Wallace

# Way

few cars on this patch of land) to catch a ride to my room on the other side of the island. In the morning I have plans to go scraping for peeler crabs.

Donald Thorn Jr., "Thornie," knocks on my door at 3:45 a.m. He seems surprised that I am awake, but it is a guise created by the first cup of coffee. My brain hit the snooze button. Thornie is 54 years old and has been making his living from the wa-



©Emily Wallace

*This peeler crab is just about done shedding and will soon be packed live, refrigerated, and make its journey to a New York City frying pan.*



©Emily Wallace

ters around here since he was 16. He is used to being awake this time of morning. I, however, am not.

It will be nearly three hours before a hint of light, but for the crabbers on Tangier, it is time to get to work. Beginning in the late spring, and sometimes lasting through early October, Thornie scrapes peeler crabs from the flats around the island and puts them into tanks, waiting for them to shed and turn into softshells. He has to check the tanks on a regular basis to make sure the crabs don't get too hard, at which point they are no good.

We hop down from the dock and onto his small skiff for the short ride to his crab house, a small shack on stilts where Thornie keeps his tanks and his larger crabbing boat.

"We use outboards like you use power," he says as he fires the motor and putts across the channel. I chuckle. As soon as the boat is tied to the crab house, Thornie gets to work in the tanks, sorting the crabs and pulling the ones that have shed during the night. When he is done, he arranges the softshells by size, gently places them on newspaper in a cardboard box, and puts them in the



fridge. They will stay alive there and tomorrow catch a boat to Crisfield, Maryland. From there they will ride by truck to New York or Philadelphia where they will find their way, fresh, into a frying pan by tomorrow evening.

It only takes an hour to sort and arrange the crabs. Then there is nothing to do but sit in the crab house and wait for light. Jeff shows up around five and he and Thornie tell tales of the old days and some of the new. There used to be 60 or 70 watermen working peeler crabs, but that number has dropped to around 20. Most of those guys have gone to tuggin' like Jeff, and there are few, if any, of the younger generation that show an interest in making a living off the water anymore.

Jeff and Thornie wear the sadness over this dying way of life on their shirtsleeves. "It's like losing the last farmer," Jeff says, who doesn't expect the waterman way of life will be around in 20 or 30 more years. "But I guess I won't be around to see it."

In an hour, a hint of light appears over the water, and Thornie gives the word that it is time for us to head to the crabbing grounds. Jeff is going to check a net he put out for flounder the day before.

We don't say much as we pull out of the channel and head around the

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*It will be nearly three hours before a hint of light, but for the crabbers on Tangier, it is time to get to work.*

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island on a fifteen-minute ride to the shallow flats where we will pull nets for crabs. A gull lands on the bow and catches a ride while a few others gather behind us. They apparently know the drill. To the east, dawn's colors bloom on the horizon.

The boat ride provides time for contemplation. I imagine for a moment—seeing this every morning as Thornie does. There is a bite to the fall air that just starts to sting my cheeks. It feels incredibly good. Two black ducks sail overhead, heading for the



©Emily Wallace

*Backbreaking work, long hours, and exposure to the weather combine for a tough way to make a living. Most watermen say there is nothing they'd rather be doing.*

marshes. In another couple of months the ducks will be here in good numbers: redheads, pintails, widgeon, and brant by the thousands. I can't help but think how good it is to be alive, to be here.

For five hours we scrape the flats for crabs, dragging nets over either side of the boat for several minutes before pulling them in, sorting through the hardshells for the peelers and tossing them into baskets. I try to help a little just to get the feel for it, but I can tell I am mostly in the way.

Eventually Thornie gives me the job of steering the boat while he pulls the nets, a job usually accomplished by a rope tied to the steering stick, but I'll take it. It makes me feel involved at least. It's hard to sit and watch someone work. We head in at eleven, a little earlier than usual, but I get the

sense that Thornie is ready to go in as well. Normally he would stay until twelve, he says, but it has been a long season, one that will likely end in the next week or so as the weather cools a bit more. We have two bushel baskets, each filled about halfway with peelers, a decent morning according to Thornie.

When I say my goodbyes, I can't help but think that tomorrow morning I will be back on the highway heading to work while Thornie will be here, scraping crabs from this same shallow flat. As the ferry pulls from the island, headed back to Reedville, I can just make out the skeleton of a duck blind on a flat to the west of the land. In a few months it will be bushed with cedars to hide the hunters, and I will return to try my hand at some ducks.



## The Seasons Turn

January 22nd, the forecast is for winds out of the northeast at 25 miles an hour with gusts up to 50. Jeff called the night before to say he did not think we could make the run over from Reedville in the morning, that we would have to drive up the shore to Crisfield and catch the ferry over. Fortunately, though, things calmed a bit overnight and now he thinks we can make it.

Four of us load our gear onto his boat. We don't need much: waders, guns, a change of clothes. We will just be hunting one afternoon and the following morning. Things are noticeably different this time of year. Rather than stand in the back, exposed to the elements, we huddle in the cabin, taking advantage of what will be our last bit of warmth until evening.

On the way out of the creek, we pass the menhaden factory. There are no fish burning now, a pleasant advantage to this time of year. The conversation quickly turns to the birds. There have been plenty around, Jeff says, and it has been a good year when the weather has been right. I am disappointed to hear that Thornie will not be able to join us for the hunt. His father is having heart surgery on the mainland.

The ride is rougher than I have experienced before. By the time we reach the middle of the bay we are holding onto what we can to keep from tipping into each other as we crest and fall with each wave. Eventually, though, we see the island in the distance, the waters begin to calm, and we go out back to sort through our gear and get ready for the hunt. We will leave straight from the boat to the blinds.

With the boat tied and everything settled, a friend and I hop into a small fiberglass boat with Jeff. We head to the same blind I saw leaving in Octo-

ber just to the west of the island. On the way we jump thousands of red-heads, brant, and geese rafted on the shallow flats surrounding a handful of small islands. While it is nice to see so many birds around, they are difficult to hunt when rafted in such large numbers, but we are still optimistic.

Jeff pulls the boat into the blind, we tie off, and we wait. For an hour we watch as the birds we scattered trickle back, flight after flight, around the small island where we first jumped them. Nothing seems willing to give our spread of decoys a decent look until a group of brant appear low from the north heading right at us. Hunkered down in the boat behind the cedars, we don't dare to look as Jeff gives the birds a low guttural hoot to signal that everything is just fine over here. The birds continue on their way right to us, sliding into range against the wind when Jeff calls a duck hunter's favorite words, "Take 'em." We drop three of the six brant. The skunk is out of the boat.

While picking up the birds, we notice more flights heading toward the island a quarter-mile in the distance. We decide to pull a few decoys from the spread and head that way in hopes of a little more action.

The wind has certainly freshened as we hunker behind a small pile of sand and reeds some 25 yards from our decoys. It's a different feel from

the blind. The nearly constant wind in the middle of the bay removes any proof that there have been hunters here before, that there have been *humans* here before. Huddled against this point, one can imagine for a moment himself the first. I am overcome by a strange feeling, like I am living in a painting I have seen somewhere before. I soak in the surreal of the moment when my friend says, "What's this?"

We turn to see a pair of gadwalls, cupped and fighting the wind, trying their hardest to get to our decoys. It seems like forever before they get in range. We tell ourselves to wait, wait, wait, until finally, when we can't take it one second longer, they are here, at the edge of the decoys. We rise from the sand, the wind howling in our faces. The birds bank and rise. We each pick one and pull the trigger. They both fall and splash in the shallows against the bank. In this moment, at least, all is right with the world. All is right on Tangier. □

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For information about hunting on Tangier, contact Jeff Crockett at [jcduck53@yahoo.com](mailto:jcduck53@yahoo.com), or (757) 694-1055.

*With little work to be done during winter, many Tangier watermen take to the marshes in search of waterfowl, both guiding trips and "gunning" for themselves.*





A man wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, sunglasses, and a watch is holding a large, circular fishing net. Inside the net is a large, spotted fish, likely a gar. The man is looking down at the fish with a smile. The background is a bright, overcast sky.

# THE FINE

*A well-known  
gar fisherman reveals  
a few secrets.*

story and photos  
by Lynda Richardson

**T**he early fall morning air was cool and wet; a soft wind blew lightly against my face. With an overcast sky it seemed a lot colder than it was, and I hugged my fleece jacket tightly around me. All was quiet except for the lapping of water, a few gulls yelping overhead, and the truck backing up. Eddy Johnston was busily getting his boat into the water. A one-man team, he had everything under control. Before I could offer any help, Eddy had the boat off the trailer loaded with gear and had parked the truck. We were ready to go.

As I walked back along the shoreline to get to the boat I noticed several large fragments of scallop shell in the sand. These were fossils from a time millions of years ago when this ground was covered by an ocean. We were at Claremont in Surry County and the water before us was the James River. Different from the James River I know back in Richmond, this was an area of brackish water and high cliffs



# THE ART OF GAR FISHING



Left, Eddy Johnston hoists a 14-lb. citation longnose gar from the waters of Chippokes Creek at Claremont Manor in Surry County. Above, Johnston drives his Chincoteague 20 scow on Chippokes Creek toward some great gar fishing.

edging the river and many of the creeks that feed into it. Having an ancient ocean background, the cliffs of Claremont were known for bearing fossils. Over the centuries the cliffs fell away to reveal fossil shark and ray teeth as well as the scallop shells I was seeing. Though these creatures were long gone, there was at least one remaining remnant: the object of our pursuit. We were going fishing for *lepisosteus osseus*, more commonly known as the longnose gar.

Eddy Johnston is well known for his gar fishing prowess. He once held the World Record IGFA 6-lb. tippet fly fishing record for gar on Chippokes Creek: 7 lb., 14 oz. He earned his Expert Angler award for gar in 2003 and he has 19

trophy gar citations covering a bathroom wall to prove it. (He actually has 25 citations!) I asked Eddy why the fascination with angling for a fish normally considered by many as "trash."

With a smile he replied, "It's fun because no one else does it!"

Eddy was first introduced to gar in the 1980s when he joined the Virginia Anglers Club and entered a gar fishing tournament that was held on the Chickahominy River. With the help of some other club members, Eddy says he either captured second or won the tournament. (Nice friends!) But it was the Anglers Club tournament where he became hooked, or "snagged" as he likes to admit, on gar fishing.

As we took off across the large ex-

ppanse of water, the hum of the motor and the salty spray got me to thinking about how you would find gar in such a large area. Eddy told me that you normally wouldn't find just one fish in a spot, but many, and he seemed to be heading somewhere specific. I strained to see some clue as to what we were looking for.

"You have to look for a bend in the river, like a hook, and that area also has to have deep water." And as if on cue, Eddy pointed just ahead of us. "Don't you see them?"

And I'm thinking, you have got to be kidding me. What am I seeing?

He pointed again and said, "You can't see *that*?" I squinted and finally spotted it. I couldn't believe my eyes! We weren't even as close as a football field and I could see hundreds of splashes on the water's surface. Eddy corrected me, "Thousands."

As we got to the spot, the noise from our engine spooked the fish into dropping out of sight but Eddy turned on his fish finder and told me to take a look. "When I first discovered this spot," he said, "my depth finder was telling me that it was only 3 feet deep here. Well, I knew that



The teeth of a longnose gar are quite sharp. You might want to land one using a terry cloth towel.



wasn't true but I finally figured out why. There are so many gar here that the depth finder was bouncing off the backs of the fish! It is really about 24 feet here." Now that is a lot of gar!

Gar don't have many enemies. In fact, the only creatures that will kill a gar for food are osprey and alligators... and we don't have alligators in Virginia. And gar live a *really* long time. It is estimated that they can live up to 20 years. So as you can imagine, the gar population has exploded. Are they good to eat? People nowadays don't eat them, but back in the 1880s gar were considered one of the principal fish foods and are still eaten in some areas of Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. You can, of course, find gar recipes on the Internet!

As we anchored and settled into our spot the gar began to resurface and gulp air. Some jumped out of the water, porpoising and splashing around us. It was unbelievable. Eddy

began to get his rods and bait together and explained to me about the "fine art" of gar fishing.

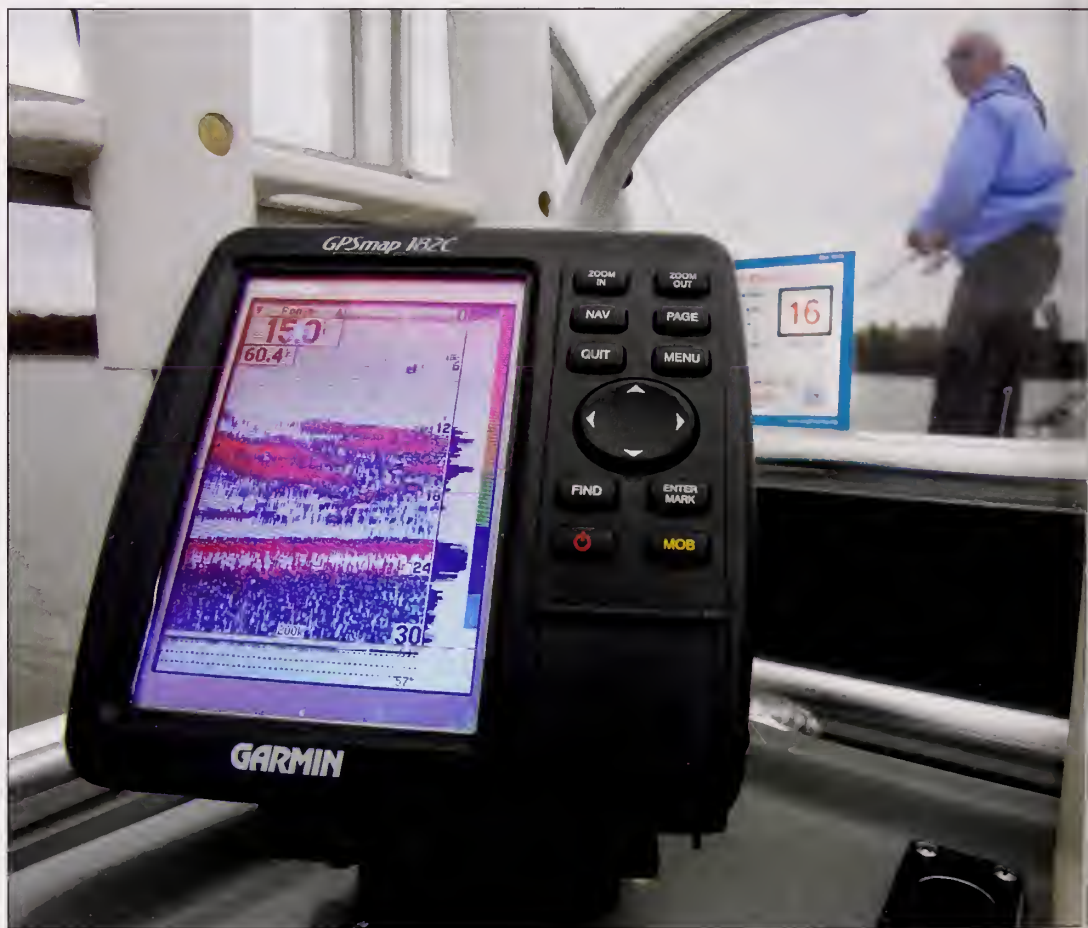
First to know, gar *love* jumbo shiners. They love them fresh dead, wounded, stinky dead, and alive. What Eddy likes to do is put one of everything out to see what the gar favor that day. When spin fishing, Eddy prefers to use 6- and 8-lb. test line and a 7- to 7.5-foot flipping stick, giving him a hearty rod to control the fish. Red hooks in the 1/0 to 4/0 size are preferred but never a treble hook. (You're just asking for trouble with a treble!) If you prefer, a 1/4-oz. jighead and red hook work well together, adding a little weight to drop your bait deeper. Live shiners should be hooked in the nose and you can use a syringe to add air to dead ones so that they will float longer.

Most of the gar that Eddy has caught in the past were taken deep, so keep this in mind if you decide to



*This assortment of artificial flies includes great lures for catching the finicky gar.*

fish for gar. You can leave a line out or cast and make a slow retrieve. But most importantly, don't hurry the bite! Gar are very sensitive to vibration on the line, so you will want to disengage your clicker from the drag.



*Left, gar love shiners in any condition. Right, a Garmin depth finder shows numerous longnose gar resting below the surface.*





*When using artificial baits, soft bodied lures are best, as gar seem to avoid biting anything hard.*

After grabbing a bait, the gar will swim off with it, hoping to avoid having it stolen by another gar. The gar will find a safe spot, then chew on the bait—trying to position it head first into its throat where it can finally

*"You have to look for a bend in the river, like a hook, and that area also has to have deep water."*

*Eddy Johnston*

swallow its meal. This particular method of eating is why you have to be patient and not try to hook the fish right away. If you "set the hook" before the hook is anywhere close to the mouth, obviously you're not going to bring in the fish. This is why fishermen lose a lot of gar immediately or right at the boat.

Eddy threw out an assortment of shiners around the boat and, as the wind moved us around, maneuvered the rods like chess pieces to keep the line from tangling. Soon, a rod dipped and line began to slowly peel off of one. Instinctively I stood up to grab it but Eddy waved me down. "Patience... he's just playing with it." It was a game of patience and restraint, but after several hours we caught two decent-sized gar and a couple of small blue cats. It was slow going, but that made each fish much more appreciated. Finally, we

hooked into a big one that even Eddy seemed excited about.

Line began to peel off a rod so Eddy picked it up and held it while the fish swam away and stopped. It moved a little more, and then I watched Eddy as his expression turned to one of deep concentration. It seemed as if he was contemplating what the fish was doing. I couldn't tell exactly what triggered it, but suddenly Eddy decided to reel and the fish was hooked, or at least we hoped so.

"Okay, now this is a good one!" Once the huge gar felt resistance, the fight was on. It thrashed its head and swam hard while Eddy carefully and quickly tried to get it to the boat. "You don't want to fight a fish too long or it will chew up the line!" Ready with a large net, this one-man team dipped under the fish and had it in the boat. It was big and we were both excited.

"Is that a citation? Is that a citation? Is it?" I couldn't help myself!

A Virginia state citation gar has to be either 10 pounds or 40 inches. This fish, citation number 25 for Eddy, was a 14 pounder and instantly became a model for gar fishing. I photographed Eddy doing everything with that fish. His patience (and the gar's) definitely paid off with the shots I was able to capture. (And it's a good thing that gar breathe air!)

When Eddy finally lowered the

gar gently over the side, it dropped down, blending into the dark water and out of sight only to reappear on the surface swimming away as if nothing had happened. Soon after we were done for the day and headed back to the put-in to load up and head home. I was still excited about the big gar and had loads of questions:

- What was the Virginia state record? 25 lbs. 2 oz. caught in 1987 at Lake Prince.
- What was the world record? 50 lbs. caught in 1954 at Trinity River in Texas.
- How about world record on a fly rod? 25 lb. 2 oz. Wow!

So where can one catch a gar in Virginia? Eddy reported that the James River probably has the highest concentration of longnose gar, while the Chickahominy River is a likely second. Creeks off of the James, like Chippokes and Herring and even the



*A live jumbo shiner is hooked in the mouth in preparation of being tossed overboard.*

Dragon Run (part of the Piankatank River system), are also good waterways to try. And although gar feed mostly at night, you can have fabulous luck during the day fishing anytime, any season, all year long. If you want a challenge, they are a great fighting fish, but the secret is finding them. And, oh yeah, having patience and knowing when to reel them in.

Eddy smiled, "There is a fine art to gar fishing. Another reason I like it so much." □

*Lynda Richardson is a freelance photographer and writer. She writes the "Photo Tips" column for the magazine.*



# Cub Scouts

## Yesterday and Today

**Scouting has taught core values for the past 100 years—and it's still going strong.**

story and photos  
by Marc N. McGlade

**D**o your best. That's the motto of the Cub Scouts. And don't forget it.

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA), of which the Cub Scouts is a part, is one of America's largest and most prominent values-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for future leaders. Scouting builds character, develops personal fitness, teaches boys responsibilities, and enables them to participate in citizenship activities, among other benefits.

In fact, this has been the case for 100 years! The BSA reached this giant milestone earlier in 2010, as they celebrated their 100th birthday. Officially launched 20 years after the Boy Scouts, the Cub Scouts at the end of the first year (1930) reached 5,102 members.

*Archery is one of the sports Cub Scouts can participate in, especially during summer camps.*







*When Cub Scouts receive their Bobcat Badge, it's a rite of passage.*

The BSA couples lifelong values with educational activities and fun. An excerpt from the BSA's website says it best: "The Boy Scouts of America believes—and, through a century of experience, knows—that helping youth is a key to building a more conscientious, responsible, and productive society."

Helping a child stay on the straight and narrow is never an easy chore. While introducing a kid to fishing, hunting, hiking, or other outdoors-oriented activities doesn't mean they won't stray at some point, it goes a long way toward teaching core values and beliefs that those of us who treasure the outdoors hold dear.

Boys from first grade through fifth grade, or ages 7 to 10, are eligible to join. Those older than 10, or who have completed the fifth grade, cannot join Cub Scouts; however, they may be eligible to join the Boy Scouts or Venturing program. There are Cub Scout ranks along the way that boys attain through electives and mandatory requirements. The youngest rank is Tiger Scout. Following that is Wolf, Bear, Webelos I, and Webelos II.

Adults lead exciting activities at the weekly den meetings for each rank, while monthly pack meetings assemble all the Cub Scout ranks.



*The shooting sports are among the favorite activities that Cub Scouts pursue.*

Opening flag ceremonies, the Pledge of Allegiance, and closing ceremonies reinforce core messages.

A cubmaster leads the pack. With a named cubmaster, the pack operates more effectively, as all dens and ranks follow the same plan. This leadership role also provides greater opportunities for recognition and parental involvement.

Cub Scouts can earn belt loops and pins as recognition for participation in specific activities. In the academics and sports program, the boys learn new skills, become better scholars, learn sportsmanship, and have fun. The list is lengthy, but some academics and sports include fishing, baseball, chess, astronomy, computers, golf, tennis, science, hiking, and skateboarding.





*Adult leaders accompany Cub Scouts on their overnight, summertime camping adventures.*

## Key Facts and More

- Cub Scout Promise: I promise to do my best; to do my duty to God and my country; to help other people; and to obey the Law of the Pack.
- Law of the Pack: The Cub Scout follows Akela. The Cub Scout helps the pack go. The pack helps the Cub Scout grow. The Cub Scout gives goodwill.
- Cub Scout Motto: Do your best.
- The annual popcorn sale is a key fundraiser for Cub Scouts. Seventy percent of each sale goes to local scouting.
- Scouting for Food is an annual event that Cub Scouts and adult leaders participate in to collect food for local food banks for subsequent distribution to those in need.
- U.S. citizenship is not required of youth or adult members in the Cub Scouts.
- Members of the Cub Scouts receive a subscription to *Boys' Life* magazine.
- As of 2008, the total Cub Scout enrollment stood at 1,655,635 boys.
- For additional information on the Cub Scouts, visit [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org), or for details specific to Virginia, visit [www.scoutingvirginia.org](http://www.scoutingvirginia.org).

The theory behind belt loops and pins is to help fulfill the aims of scouting; that is, to build character, develop citizenship, and encourage mental and physical fitness. The organization stresses this is a chance for scouts to try something new, do their best, and earn recognition at the same time.

## From Yesterday to Today

The life lessons taught from Cub Scouts linger in many men's memory banks today as they recount their youth. Drew Biehler, cubmaster of Pack 2831 from Midlothian, recalls his days in Cub Scouts as a youngster.

"Being part of Cub Scouts broadened my understanding of nature, wildlife, and the outdoors," he said. "I felt a sense of belonging that was outside of my grade school experiences."

Ask most former scouts and they will echo Biehler's sentiments. The friendships, learning experiences, and memories are still fresh for mem-

bers of this organization, regardless of how long ago their membership occurred.

"While I did not advance to Boy Scouts myself, looking back I feel I missed a really great opportunity," Biehler explained. "Being a cubmaster allows me to spend quality time with my two sons. I get to live vicariously through them as they advance in rank through scouting. My older son is a Star (rank) in Boy Scouts, while my younger son is a Webelos I in Cub Scouts."

Children today are faced with far more distractions than those of previous generations. Communication is instantaneous, technology is changing at light speed, and news—both good and bad—is continuous. Text messaging and social media websites, even for youngsters, in some cases replace the telephone. While these things are undergoing rapid change and transformation, the Cub Scouts program still provides young boys with a great learning opportunity and keeps them focused in areas that many kids who are not scouts will likely miss.



*The Pinewood Derby is a signature Cub Scout activity the entire family can enjoy.*



Cub Scouts introduces young boys to camping, fishing, hiking, nature, shooting sports, and community responsibilities, among other key aspects of adolescent development. Accountability and responsibility, arguably a lost message these days, are paramount to its teachings.

The “pinewood derby” is a signature Cub Scout activity the entire family can enjoy. The excitement of planning the car design, working with a parent or other adult to construct the vehicle, and taking part in the event on race day—win or lose—is a wonderful memory for all involved.

### Carrying on the Tradition

Adult leaders are always needed in scouting. Den leaders, assistant den leaders, or adults who can organize or lead particular events are vital to the Cub Scouts sustaining and continuing to groom Virginia’s future leaders. And adults who feel they missed out by not being a Cub Scout as a youngster can greatly assist the scouts today by volunteering. As for those who grew up in this fine organization, well, they carry the memories and the life lessons that they learned while being involved in the program.

Biehler says his experience as a scouting leader has introduced him to many extremely talented, dedicated people from all walks of life. He knows he couldn’t do it alone.

“Being a leader in scouting teaches me to be extremely flexible and think fast on my feet,” he quipped. “Leading a pack the size of ours (68 boys) requires the ability to adapt quickly to changing situations, which I feel is a benefit. Having a plan B, C, and D is essential.”

Those who don the Cub Scout uniform know the importance of this fine organization to the future of Virginia’s outdoors. Happy Birthday, Scouts. Here’s to the next 100 years. Remember, do your best! □

*Marc N. McGlade is a writer and photographer from Midlothian, whose son Justin is currently at the Bear rank in Cub Scouts.*



*Scouting would not be complete without performing skits on stage!*



*The competition and camaraderie associated with the Pinewood Derby is contagious.*



# Why Crayfish

story by Cristina Santiestevan  
illustrations by Spike Knuth

**I**f you ask around, you will quickly discover that almost everyone has a crayfish story. Young, old, or in-between, we splash through streams, poke around in pond muck, and flip over stones and logs in pursuit of these lobster-like freshwater crustaceans. And if we actually find one? The brave among us will scoop them up, dodging claws to claim their prize. Even children (or adults) too timid to touch the crayfish will gather close to count legs, examine antennae, and wonder at their thick, armor-like exoskeleton. And, no matter what, the adventure will be retold as a story someday.

"For a lot of folks, collecting crayfish was their first real foray into wildlife," explains Chris Burkett, the Wildlife Action Plan coordinator with the Department (DGIF).

But, for all our stories, we really know very little about crayfish. "If we tried to write out everything we know about crayfish, it'd be a pretty short list," says Burkett. We know, for example, that crayfish are omnivores and opportunists, and will eat "just about anything they can get their



*Raccoons are crayfish predators.*

claws on," according to DGIF Biologist Brian Watson, who rattles off a long list: "Vegetation, fish, aquatic insects, snails, small mussels, salamanders, and even other crayfish." We also know that an equally long list of creatures eat crayfish, including muskrats, raccoons, aquatic birds and, of course, other crayfish. Their primary predator is fish. Crayfish are an especially important part of the diet for bass, and "declines in crayfish can lead to declines in sportfish like bass," according to Watson.

*Big Sandy Crayfish, endangered (Cambarus veteranus)*





# Count

Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild!

To these lists of predators and prey, we can add the facts that crayfish are relatively short-lived, fairly sensitive to water quality and habitat degradation, and are dirt movers and tunnel diggers. Their tunnel-digging habit likely influences other species. As crayfish move dirt and sediment around, they alter the soil structure and create niches where aquatic plants may take root.

Many questions remain, however. The biggest among these is also the simplest: How many crayfish species are there in Virginia? The current best estimate is 24 native species of crayfish, and four non-native species. Of these, 13 species are identified as "species of greatest conservation need" by the *Virginia Wildlife Action Plan*, which seeks to identify and protect Virginia's wildlife species that are most at risk. The big sandy crayfish (*Cambarus veteranus*)—native only to Virginia, West Virginia, and Ken-

tucky—is included on the state endangered species list.

Twenty-four species is a lot of crayfish. Virginia ranks in the top 25% of states for crayfish diversity. But the tally is "in a bit of flux," says Watson, who believes there may be other species hiding in remote creeks and streams. "I would not be surprised to see another half dozen new species." Some of those species almost certainly will be added to Virginia's already lengthy list of conservation-needy arthropods. But, before that happens, we first need to identify them.

"The first step to conserving them is going to be learning more about them," says Burkett.

The path to finding those currently unknown species is a wet and soggy one, leading through Virginia's creeks, ponds, and marshy areas. Too many for Burkett, Watson, and other DGIF staff to survey alone. One solution may be Virginia's Master Naturalists, a statewide collection of volunteers who are dedicated to the management of Virginia's natural resources and wild areas. In a trial program launched last summer, the Blue Ridge Foothills & Lakes Master Naturalist Chapter—based in Rocky Mount, Virginia—collected crayfish and aquatic snails from Smith Mountain Lake for the DGIF.

"They are literally putting more boots on the ground," explains Burkett, who hopes to see the program expand to other Master Naturalist chapters across the state this summer.



*Crayfish mound*





*Crayfish carrying eggs*

## Act Wild

Here are three simple ways you can help Virginia's crayfish and other aquatic species:

1. Crayfish—and many other aquatic species—are very sensitive to pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals. By reducing or eliminating the chemicals you use around your house, you will help aquatic animals throughout your region.
2. Join Virginia's Master Naturalists for a chance to make a real difference with Virginia's wildlife. Master Naturalist chapters are located throughout the state and always welcome new members. Visit [www.VirginiaMasterNaturalist.org](http://www.VirginiaMasterNaturalist.org) for more information.
3. Splash through a creek and turn over a few stones with the children in your life. Early adventures help children learn about the world around them, and teach them to care for wild places and the animals and plants that live there.

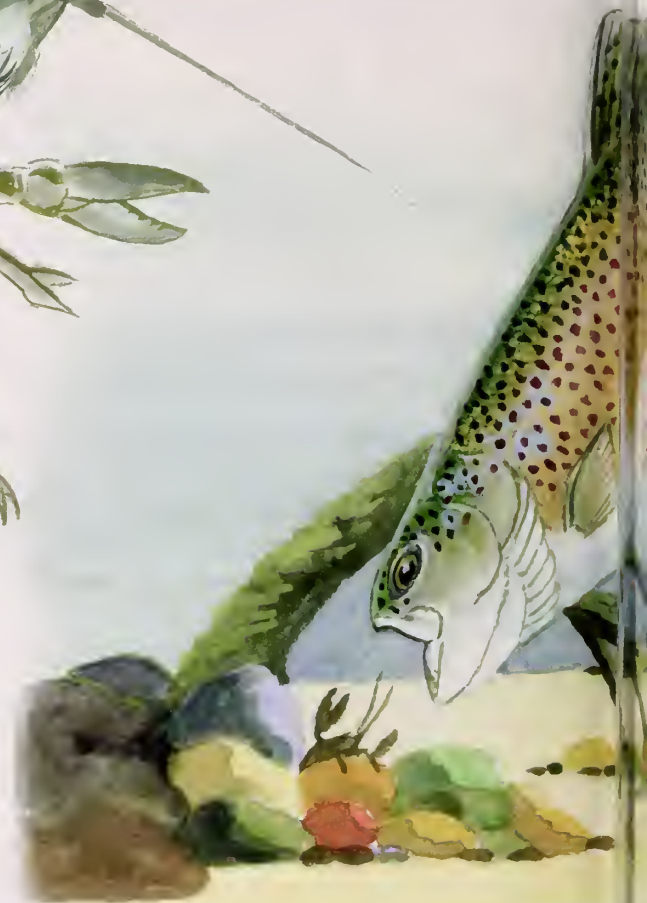
The program's beauty lies in its simplicity. Following a day of classroom instruction—including tips on collecting and identifying crayfish—Master Naturalists take to the field to collect crayfish, snails, and other freshwater invertebrates. Any collected specimens are then sent to Watson, who identifies the species and enters the information into a

statewide database of crayfish sightings. The data are already helping expand our knowledge of crayfish distribution in the state. Eventually, this information will help DGIF make conservation decisions about crayfish and other aquatic species.

But why go to all this trouble to count a few reclusive crayfish in backwater streams and creeks? "As with any aquatic species I work with, I tell people you



*White River Crayfish  
(Procambarus acutus)*







*Trout are crayfish predators.*

do not need to care about crayfish, but you better care about what they are telling you," says Watson. "If crayfish are absent, or if their numbers are depressed within a stream or a watershed, that is a clear indication that something is wrong. That the environment is unhealthy."

Crayfish are fairly sensitive to the quality of their water and habitat. Disturbances to their aquatic environments—such as pollution, nearby construction, changes in water flow—can have dramatic and negative impacts on crayfish populations. This means that crayfish are a good bioindicator species—a species whose presence or absence tells us

about the relative health of the ecosystem. Put another way, a pond or creek without crayfish is probably an unhealthy pond or creek, possibly contaminated with chemicals or deluged with debris from nearby construction.

But crayfish can play another role as bioindicators. They can help us identify areas where the water is

clean and the ecosystem is healthy. Populations rebound quickly when problems are resolved and habitats are restored to their natural condition. Their numbers often return to healthy levels much faster than the aquatic snails and mussels that may eventually repopulate the area. This means that crayfish may be able to help biologists recognize whether a habitat restoration project has been successful, or needs additional work. By studying our crayfish, we may learn more about the health of entire watersheds.

And, the health of our watersheds is not something we can take for granted. "If you look at the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan, you'll see that about 60% of our species of greatest need are aquatic," explains Burkett. By learning more about our crayfish, we will learn more about all of the state's aquatic species. The clues they provide will help us identify the places that most need our help. By protecting our crayfish, we will be protecting our great blue herons, largemouth bass, ducks, beavers, and more. And, because we rely on the same waterways that these creatures do, we will also be protecting ourselves—ensuring our water is clean, healthy, and safe for drinking and fishing and playing.

"We are only as healthy as our environment," says Watson. "Crayfish can help provide this diagnosis." □

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*Cristina Santiestevan writes about wildlife and the environment from her home in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains.*

*Blue Crawfish  
(Cambarus monongalensis)*





Great-horned owls in nest ©Gregory J. Pels



# Hoffler Creek

## An Urban Oasis



*Amid the fast pace  
of Hampton Roads,  
residents have  
found a place to  
slow down.*

by Ben Swenson

**I**t's rare in Virginia to travel into a city to encounter the creatures that inhabit the commonwealth's more wild stretches, but a place in Portsmouth is proving that "urban" and "nature" are not mutually exclusive. Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve, or HCWP, is a 142-acre refuge located



*Members of the Hampton Roads Bird Club take to the woods during one of their many meetings at HCWP.*

© Ben Swenson



© Ben Swenson

*Signage helps visitors identify species that thrive within the sanctuary.*

in Portsmouth's northwestern corner. It is free and open to the public Tuesday–Saturday. As one of the few remaining undeveloped parcels in the city, and the last one on Hoffer Creek, the preserve is fast becoming a natural respite for people who live and work in the bustling region of southeast Virginia, and rightly so. It is one of the commonwealth's rare gems: an urban wildlife preserve.

Perhaps as remarkable as a nature preserve within city limits is the extraordinary grassroots effort launched by private citizens to turn this large tract into a wildlife sanctuary. For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, Hoffer Creek's eastern bank was the farm of Luther Ballard and his descendents. In 1970, the Bal-



© Ben Swenson

*Cover along Lake Ballard's shoreline provides excellent habitat for both land- and water-based creatures.*

lard family sold the property, and it eventually became a borrow pit that provided sand for state road construction projects. When the pit reached the end of its usefulness, the commonwealth was prepared to sell the land for development. There was ample waterfront property and the borrow pit, which had naturally filled with water, turned into a hand-

some 35-acre lake. It was a developer's dream.

A handful of local residents, however, considered a different use for the land. Among them was Randi Strutton, who lives just a few streets over from Hoffer Creek. Strutton and her neighbors set out to draw up alternative site plans, namely that the land be allowed to return to a natural



state. It was a tough sell; city officials had to be convinced that a nature preserve would benefit the community more than the taxes that would come with developing the property. In the end, citing the aesthetic, educational, and recreational benefits, Strutton and her neighbors were successful. Government officials accepted their formal plan for Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve and the commonwealth sold the land to the city for one dollar. Strutton now serves as the executive director of Hoffler Creek Wildlife Foundation, a position she has held for all but one of the last fifteen years.

In the decade and a half since the heavy equipment moved out, HCWP has become a place teeming with wildlife that would otherwise have a tough time eking out a living on the city streets nearby. Several distinct habitats foster numerous ecosystems that allow all sorts of creatures to thrive, thanks in part to very limited development on the site. There are a few small buildings, trails, bird blinds and observation decks, but the vast majority of the land has been allowed to grow without human interference.

Hoffler Creek is a tidal tributary of Hampton Roads. It is brackish because each high tide washes in a fresh supply of salt water from the lower Chesapeake Bay. The creek's marshy edges are lined with cordgrass, on which periwinkles feed on algae. Fish and shellfish inhabit the creek, and it's easy to spot these creatures flitting about in the shallow water from the preserve's appropriately

named "oyster pier." The creek and small fingers that extend into the marsh provide food for all manner of birds—herons, egrets, ospreys, even bald eagles.

The center of the preserve is also an aquatic ecosystem, albeit much different than Hoffler Creek. Lake Ballard's salinity certainly doesn't detract from its biodiversity. The lake itself, as well as the edge community that surrounds it, are home to plants and animals that spend their lives in and around the water: wild berries, dragonflies, turtles, fish, and waterfowl. Some of them are permanent; others come and go with the seasons.

the 1960s when their vegetable farm fell on hard times. A few pieces of the Ballards' old farming equipment still lie where the family abandoned them decades ago, now dwarfed by the trees that have grown up around them. Other than the pines, dog-

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*In the decade and a half since the heavy equipment moved out, HCWP has become a place teeming with wildlife that would otherwise have a tough time eking out a living on the city streets nearby.*

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Kids attempt to net grass shrimp, mummichogs, and other aquatic life during a "Creek Critters" program at HCWP.

These species in turn provide food and shelter for larger mammals such as otters, cottontails, red foxes, and whitetails, many of whom are only visitors to the edge of the lake and spend much of their time hidden in the forest around its rim.

The trees that surround Lake Ballard and line the edges of Hoffler Creek's marsh comprise a riparian forest—meaning it is adjacent to a body of water, or in the case of HCWP, two bodies of water. Many of the trees that make up this forest are loblolly pine, planted by the Ballard family in

wood, white oak, Southern magnolia, and others have managed to make a home for themselves in the forest. Non-native species like periwinkle and English ivy have carved out a home, too. HCWP staff members have placed identifying markers in front of trailside flora, giving visitors a chance to connect a species' name with real-life examples.

Wild animals are not the only beneficiaries of the Hoffler Creek Wildlife Foundation's stewardship. Local school groups have been using the preserve for their studies, according to Ashby Williams, HCWP's pro-



Red fox; ©Maslowski Photo



grams director. Home school and other private groups, such as the Boy Scouts, are frequent visitors to the preserve. Students from local public schools have been monitoring oysters here, although Williams says that tight budgets in public schools have meant fewer field trips in recent years. Instead of waiting for students to come to her, Williams also conducts outreach programs, traveling to classrooms around the region and offering the lessons that HCWP has to share.

Local universities have found Hoffler Creek useful for instruction, too, says Dr. Jessica Thompson, assis-



A pair of great-horned owls is released after being rehabilitated by HCWP professionals.

tant professor of biology at Christopher Newport University. For the past two years, Thompson and a team of student researchers have been conducting studies of the mummichog, a small fish found on the eastern seaboard that inhabits Hoffler Creek. The researchers are analyzing the movement and diet of mummichogs, trying to explain why the fish travel from the marsh to the creek at considerable cost in terms of energy.

Thompson is glad that Hoffler Creek is accessible and protected. "There's no comparable place cer-



Blue heron ©Gregory J. Pels

tainly in Portsmouth, and in Hampton Roads there's only a handful of places scientists can work with," she says. Thompson explains that her studies in Hoffler Creek have raised additional issues that she is researching. "The mummichogs in Hoffler Creek don't seem to move around a lot," she says. "It's likely that the marsh is a pretty high quality habitat for them so they don't have to move around to find what they need to eat. Also, because it's a small system, they don't have to go very far."

By all accounts, HCWP has been well received. It is a site on the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail, the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and the Star-Spangled Banner Geocaching Trail. The preserve continues to attract increasing numbers of visitors and local volunteers have contributed thousands of man hours of service, helping to make the preserve more user-friendly, maintaining trails and planting shoreline-stabilizing native species, for instance.

One of the staff's primary challenges, says Assistant Director Ashley Morgan, is hosting programs that attract visitors who might not normally wish to spend time outside. In addition to organizing programs that one might traditionally associate with a wildlife preserve—bird walks and kayak tours, for instance—HCWP staff are also adding interesting twists—health and fitness classes, for example. The idea is to engage visitors in leisure activities they enjoy at the preserve. "Our goal over the

next few years is to increase the number of events and expand outdoor opportunities," says Morgan. "Last year we tried 'Sunset Serenades' where people came out and had wine and hors d'oeuvres and watched the sunset, and that is absolutely enjoying the outdoors."

The staff's years of proven stewardship and innovative programming still can't overcome pressing challenges. The city of Portsmouth, facing falling revenues, recently cut their contribution to HCWP's meager budget by a third. Staff must constantly justify public funding to elected officials. Maintenance also requires persistent attention. Last year's nor'easter, for instance, damaged the preserve's oyster pier—one of the man-made structures that make wildlife more accessible to visitors.

Their challenges notwithstanding, HCWP staff are proud to work in a place where people more accustomed to city living have the opportunity to appreciate one of Virginia's green spaces. And they have plenty of happy visitors and flourishing populations of wildlife to show for it.

*Ben Swenson is a high school teacher and freelance writer living in Williamsburg.*

### For More Information

Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve is located at 4510 Twin Pines Rd. in Portsmouth. Call the preserve at 757-686-8684 or visit the website, [www.hofflercreek.org](http://www.hofflercreek.org).





Murray's Shiner

# Minnow Matching



Choosing a shiner streamer and casting ahead of a fleeing school of shiner minnows often produces success. Photo, Dwight Dyke

by Harry Murray

**S**mallmouth bass throughout Virginia feed heavily upon minnows and fly fishermen can catch many large fish on streamers which match them.

In order for you to take advantage of this exciting fishing let's see what these minnows are, the areas of the streams in which you can find each one, the best fly patterns to match

them and the best tactics to use. Some of these minnows are present in greater numbers and are more easily accessible to the bass at certain times of the year so let's investigate them on a seasonal basis.

One minnow upon which the bass feed heavily early in the season is the shiner. These are schooling minnows and at this time many of them live on gravel bars in water up to two feet deep.

The bass apparently are hungry in the cool water; you will frequently see them chasing shiner minnows in the shallows. Fishing to these marauding bass is very exciting because you are after a specific fish. One of the most successful tactics is to cast a shiner streamer such as the Silver Outcast or the Murray's Shiner out in front of a school of fleeing shiner minnows as they splash through the shallows. You will seldom see the



Murray's Madtom  
Sculpin Streamer

# Smallmouth Tactics



*John Coleman admires a large bass he caught by fishing a streamer along the bottom of the river.*

bass but you know he is close behind the minnows, so strip your streamer broadside through the school of minnows to get his attention.

Once the aquatic grassbeds form in the summer many shiner minnows live in them, and fishing a shiner streamer along these areas is very productive.

Shiner minnows live in most of the smallmouth rivers in Virginia. The Clinch River upstream of Nash's

Ford and the South Fork of the Shenandoah River downstream of Luray are especially productive areas to fish with these shiner tactics.

Sculpin minnows are bottom-huggers, living under stones ranging from softball to basketball sizes in the riffles and heavy runs. This is a productive area for beginning anglers to fish because the bass in this fast water are not wary and they will hit a fly quickly. Many of the anglers in my fly

fishing schools catch many nice bass here. My favorite two sculpin patterns are Shenk's Sculpin and Murray's Madtom/Sculpin Streamer.

A great way to fish these riffles and runs is to start just upstream of them and cast your sculpin streamer across the water. After it sinks deeply, swim it along the stream bottom by stripping it six inches every five seconds with your line hand. Wade slowly down the river, pausing every





©Dwight Dyke

*Allow a madtom/sculpin streamer to sink deeply before stripping and pulling to mimic the behavior of madtoms.*



Murray's Chub Streamer

five feet to repeat this casting and streamer-swimming tactic. In most streams there are one to two hundred feet of good sculpin water below such riffles and runs.

The Rappahannock River upstream of Kelly's Ford and the James River downstream from Howardsville have great sculpin minnow populations and will give you great smallmouth fishing with streamers which match them.

If you like to fish early in the morning and you enjoy catching large bass you should explore the

areas where natural madtoms live and use streamers which match them. These minnows, which look like young catfish, are present in great numbers around and under cobblestones in the tails of the pools. At night they come out to roam these areas in order to feed on insects and small minnows. They will often remain active for the first two hours of the day and the bass feed heavily upon them. Early morning is the peak period for this feeding, but the bass eat madtoms throughout the day.

The Murray's Madtom/Sculpin Streamer is the most consistent fly I've found to mimic these minnows. A very effective tactic is to enter the side of the pools about two hundred feet upstream of where its tail empties out into the downstream riffle. Cast across stream and allow the

streamer to sink deeply. A slow stripping action where the streamer is retrieved in several four-inch pulls every ten seconds conveys the natural swimming action of the real madtoms. Wade slowly down the river, pausing every several steps to repeat this streamer fishing tactic and I believe you'll be pleased with the number of large bass you will catch.

Natural madtoms are present in most of Virginia's smallmouth rivers but two are worth special note. The James River and the North Fork of the Shenandoah River have great populations of madtoms.

Creek chub minnows are possibly the most broadly distributed minnows in Virginia's smallmouth rivers. If you find yourself on a new stream and you are not sure what fly to use, you can usually get great fishing with a creek chub matching streamer. Fortunately we have two excellent patterns. Ed Shenk's White Streamer is great for water up to four feet deep with a moderate current, and Murray's Chub Streamer is very productive in deeper water or where there is a fast current.

The across-stream tactics you use with sculpins and madtoms are effective with these chub streamers. However, there is an additional method which will give you some of your largest bass, especially in the deep runs and pools.

This is a method I call "sweeping a streamer." You set yourself up so you are right beside the deep area you plan to fish. Your first cast is made up and across stream at a forty-five degree angle twenty feet out. The streamer is allowed to sink on a slack line. Use a 9-foot Bright Butt Leader with one Scientific Anglers Indicator in the butt section of the leader and one in the next leader strand down. Watch the indicators closely, and as the uppermost one begins sinking out of sight you know your streamer is close to the bottom of the stream. This is your cue to begin a smooth downstream sweeping action with your fly rod held high at a forty-five degree angle out over the stream.





©Dwight Dyke

*If you do your homework and match your streamer to the minnows present, you have a good chance of landing a nice smallmouth.*

This motion should be fast enough to maintain a tight line on the streamer but not fast enough to pull the fly rapidly down the stream. When you feel the strike, set the hook firmly with your line hand and rod.

Successive casts are made several feet farther up and out into the river until you have covered all the water out to thirty feet; then wade downstream, stopping every ten feet to repeat the sequence.

This "sweeping a streamer" technique is very effective because it will enable you to fish your flies deeper than any other method you can use with a floating line.

Natural crawfish are a very rich food for smallmouth bass. Although they are not minnows, I'm including them here because the tactics we use when fishing them are much like those used when fish-

ing minnow imitations. My favorite two flies to match these are Singer's Crawfish and Clouser's Turkey Crawfish.

Natural crawfish are very active in low-light levels, such as those at dawn and dusk and in slightly discolored water. Many of them live under stones ranging from softball to basketball sizes in water from two to four feet deep, so fishing your flies here is very productive.

A good tactic is to wade down the side of the river close to the bank where you see these stones and cast your crawfish fly out across stream. After it sinks deeply crawl in across the stream bottom with a slow hand-

twisting action. Wade slowly down the river and cover all of the stone-bottom part of the stream as you go.

The New River below Radford and the South Fork of the Shenandoah upstream from Front Royal hold great crawfish populations, and you can catch many nice bass on these flies.

All smallmouth bass feed on minnows. By evaluating the rivers to determine the specific minnows found in the area you plan to fish and choosing matching streamers, you will enjoy many rewarding trips. □

*Harry Murray is the owner of Murray's Fly Shop in Edinburg. He has written numerous books and articles on fly-fishing.*



Clouser's Turkey Crawfish

Singer's Crawfish





# 2009 Angler Hall of Fame

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Hall of Fame list is a compilation of all the freshwater anglers who qualified for advanced awards in the Angler Recognition Program.

To achieve the status of Master Angler I, five trophy fish of different species must be caught and registered with the Virginia Angler Recognition Program. For Master II, 10 trophy fish of different species must be caught, and so on for the Master III or IV level. Expert anglers must catch and register 10 trophy fish of the same species.

Each angler that accomplishes this feat receives a Master Angler or Expert Angler certificate and patch. Expert patches include the species on the patch. There is no fee or application for Master or Expert.

If you have records prior to 1995 and believe you may have obtained this angling status, please call the Virginia Angler Recognition Program at (804) 367-1293 to have your records checked.

The Creel-of-the-Year Award recognizes the angler who accounts for the most trophy-size fish caught and registered in the Angler Recognition Program from January 1 through December 31, annually.

## MASTER LEVEL I

Kevin Adcock  
Kenneth Ames, Sr.  
Frank Beavers, Jr.  
James Belcher, III  
Thomas Biller  
Edward Brooks, Jr.  
Robert Bruce  
James Butler, II  
Lyn Caldwell, III  
James Cannoy, Jr.  
Joseph Church, Jr.  
Donald Coleman  
Bobby Coleman  
Norman Cox, Jr.  
Thomas Crittendon  
Franklin Dalton  
Michael Davis  
James Davis, Jr.  
Kevin Deal  
Christopher Deane  
Timothy Dixon  
Ricky Dodge  
West Donley  
Ernest Downey, Jr.  
Robert Eades  
Auther Eggleston, Jr.  
Brian Epperley  
Bernard Epperly, Jr.  
James Ervin  
Christopher Ervin

Paul Farkas  
Jason Fender  
Christopher Fitzgerald  
John Fox  
Roy Fridley, Sr.  
Jerry Gallagher  
Charles Gentry, Jr.  
Kevin Glass  
Hunter Griffiths  
Joey Hall  
Allen Hodges  
Robert Holmes, Sr.  
David Hull, Jr.  
Timothy Jarrell  
Ronald Jeffords  
Gary Johnson  
Leroy Johnson  
George Joly, Jr.  
Shane Keeble  
Joseph Keesee, Jr.  
William Kost, Jr.  
John Kulick  
Kenneth Lampert, Jr.  
Chuck Leon  
Jarod Mann  
David Marsico  
William McCabe, III  
Michael McCormick  
Joshua Miklandric  
Shannon Miklandric  
Marcus Mitchell  
Christopher Mueller  
Travis Pangle

Christopher Parsley  
Ronnie Phillips  
James Pike  
Hank Rakes, Sr.  
David Reed  
Joshua Regula  
Robert Reynolds  
Joseph Rhodes  
Robert Rivenbark, Sr.  
Bruce Robertson  
Jeffrey Ross  
James Shelton  
Michael Sielicki  
Joshua Spicer  
Kenneth Stone  
Robert Svensson  
Roy Taylor  
Richard Tolley, Sr.  
Jack Trivitt  
Carlton Updike, Jr.  
William Wallace, Jr.  
David Walton  
Scott Waterman  
Jonathan Wickham  
Richard Wolford  
Robert Wood, Sr.  
Guy Woods

## MASTER LEVEL II

Stephen Cromer, Sr.  
Kendall Hall

Randy Hughes  
Lawrence Ison, Jr.  
Charles Kincaid, Jr.  
David Stacy  
Paul Wray

## MASTER LEVEL III

Joe Burwell, Sr.

## EXPERTS

**Largemouth Bass**  
James Beard  
Dean Blankenship  
Stephen Brown  
Carl Clevinger  
Terry Cox, Jr.  
Donald Dabney, Sr.  
Jack Eubank  
Thom Hagen  
Ray Hairfield  
Wayland Horrell, Jr.  
Jerry Hoyle, Jr.  
Tripp Lightner, III  
Darrell Mayo  
Paul Minter  
David Nelson  
Brooks Noble  
Gary Owen  
Donnie Perry  
Joseph Rhodes

Kenneth Roller  
Larry Scarborough, Sr.  
Robert Shiro, Jr.  
Christopher Stanley, Sr.

## Smallmouth Bass

Rockey Burleson  
Joe Burwell, Sr.  
N. Scott Meyerhoffer  
Jeffery Warter  
William Yost

## Crappie

Charles Daniel  
Robert Highlander, Jr.

## Sunfish

Jimmie Edwards  
John Faulcon, Jr.  
Russell Glenn, II  
Dean Harcum  
Cecil Johnston  
William Jones  
Michael Marks  
Jacob Nun  
Manuel Porter  
Franklin Pulley, Jr.  
Jesse Redd  
Kevin Seimetz  
Hiram Smith, IV  
Mark Wood  
Wade Wright

## White Perch

Kenneth Runyon, Sr.  
Alan Strbavy, Sr.

## Channel Catfish

Richard Montgomery  
Kenneth Runyon, Jr.

## Blue Catfish

Brian Allen  
Mark Anderson  
Dean Baker  
James Boothe  
Darian Brown  
Jonathan Cosby  
Robert Dykes  
William Goldsmith  
Robert Grinstead, Jr.  
Billy Mayhew  
Jack Rakes, Jr.  
LeRoy Rice, Jr.  
Bill Schieman  
James Taylor  
Ryan Taylor  
Norma Woodward

## Rainbow Trout

Michael Bowling  
Gordon Bryant  
Glenn Clingenpeel  
Walter Crouch, Jr.



Michael Ewell  
Mark Fields  
Jonathan Haga  
Spencer Musick  
David Sadler  
Billy Tosh

#### **Brook Trout**

James Belcher, III  
Danny Dugan  
Patrick Funkhouser  
Kevin Glass  
Stephen Miklandric  
Kenneth Sardegna

#### **Brown Trout**

Mark Eavers

#### **Chain Pickerel**

Gregory Hicks

#### **Muskellunge**

Teddy Blevins  
Michael Coleman  
Kenneth Dalton  
Matt Gillispie  
William Haines  
Ron Lorden  
Christopher Rhoades  
Cecil Welcher, Sr.

#### **Walleye**

Raymond Perrin, III  
David Shelton

#### **Yellow Perch**

Steven Blehm  
Michael Bowling  
Milton Bowling  
William Buck, Jr.  
Frank Camp  
James Davis  
Jeffery Downey  
Adam Frost  
Tommy Hayes

Robert Highlander, Jr.

Andrew Hill, II  
James Marcum  
James McCain, III  
Chase McKinney  
Hunter McKinney  
John Nicholson, Sr.  
Jeffery Ross  
William Woods

#### **Gar**

Gary Harmon  
Kevin Gunn

#### **Carp**

Leonard Corum

#### **Creel of the Year**

Roy Taylor - 36  
Crappie (1)  
Blue Catfish (1)  
Chain Pickerel (2)  
Yellow Perch (32)

## 2009 ANGLERS OF THE YEAR

SPECIES/SIZE	ANGLER'S NAME/HOME	BODY OF WATER	DATE
Largemouth Bass, 16 lbs. 8 oz., 26 ½ in.	James Wood, St. Stephens Church, VA	Private Pond	07/19/2009
Smallmouth Bass, 7 lbs. 2 oz., 23 in.	J. Mitch Saville, Blacksburg, VA	New River	02/26/2009
Crappie, 3 lbs. 12 oz., 17 ½ in.	Shon Roberts, Danville, VA	Buggs Island Lake	03/07/2009
Rock Bass, 1 lbs. 9 oz., 11 ½ in.	Richard Wolford, Stony Creek, VA	Nottoway River	09/07/2009
Rock Bass, 1 lbs. 9 oz., 12 in.	Mark Ferguson, Lynchburg, VA	Falling River	05/25/2009
Rock Bass, 1 lbs. 9 oz., 13 in.	Carlos Thomas, Jr., Martinsville, VA	Smith River	03/24/2009
Sunfish, 2 lbs. 8 oz., 12 ¾ in.	John Hughes, Keysville, VA	Private Pond	08/27/2009
White Bass, 3 lbs. 4 oz., 19 in.	Charles Jarvis, Waynesboro, VA	Smith Mountain Lake	04/05/2009
Hybrid Striper, 13 lbs. 0 oz.	Robert Rakes, Christiansburg, VA	Claytor Lake	05/01/2009
Freshwater Drum, 12 lbs. 4 oz.	James Cannoy, Jr., Martinsville, VA	Buggs Island Lake	07/23/2009
Striped Bass, 36 lbs. 0 oz., 43 in.	Diana Felbinger, Hampton, VA	Smith Mountain Lake	05/19/2009
White Perch, 2 lb. 5 oz.	Alan Strbavy, Sr., Virginia Beach, VA	Elizabeth River	05/24/2009
Channel Catfish, 24 lbs. 14 oz, 38 in.	Lee Rush, Colonial Heights, VA	Appomattox River	08/13/2009
Blue Catfish, 90 lbs. 0 oz., 52 in.	Derek Mayhew, Gretna, VA	James River	01/30/2009
Flathead Catfish, 49 lbs. 0 oz. , 49 ¼ in.	David Elvington, Stuart, VA	Buggs Island Lake	09/20/2009
Rainbow Trout, 12 lbs. 8 oz., 32 in.	Mark Eavers, Greenville, VA	Cedar Springs	04/09/2009
Brook Trout, 6 lbs. 4 oz., 21 ¼ in.	Daniel Rhymer, Gatlinburg, TN	Cedar Springs	10/17/2009
Brown Trout, 10 lbs., 0 oz., 25 in.	Julian Heron, Jr., Great Falls, VA	Beaver Creek	05/15/2009
Chain Pickerel, 6 lbs. 5 oz., 31 in.	Jamerson Gallihugh, Gordonsville, VA	Lake Anna	07/10/2009
Muskellunge, 39 lbs. 12 oz., 52 in.	Philip Mabe, Max Meadows, VA	New River	07/10/2009
Northern Pike, 16 lbs., 5 oz., 42 in.	Guy Woods, Broadway, VA	Lake Laura	05/07/2009
Walleye, 11 lbs. 4 oz., 31 ½ in.	Jerry Casstevens, Mt. Airy, NC	Claytor Lake	10/21/2009
Yellow Perch, 2 lbs. 0 oz., 13 in.	Weldon Garber, Harrisonburg, VA	Lake Moomaw	05/19/2009
Gar, 22 lbs. 6 oz.	Leonard Corum, Dolphin, VA	Lake Gaston	08/16/2009
Bowfin, 12 lbs. 5 oz., 30 ¾ in.	Roy Cook, Sr., Richmond, VA	Chickahominy Lake	09/27/2009
Carp, 38 lbs. 14 oz., 41 ¼ in.	Randall Alford, Willis, VA	New River	05/15/2009

**PLEASE NOTE:** You can find all you need to know about the Trophy Fish Program at [www.HuntFishVA.com](http://www.HuntFishVA.com) or call 804-367-1293.





# Journal

## 2010 Outdoor Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise noted, for current information and registration on workshops go to the "Upcoming Events" page on our website at [www.HuntFishVA.com](http://www.HuntFishVA.com) or call 804-367-7800.

**June 4-6:** Free Fishing Days.

**June 5-19:** Spring squirrel season, certain areas.

**June 15:** Nature Photography Day.

For more information go to [http://www.nanpa.org/nature\\_photography\\_day\\_event.php](http://www.nanpa.org/nature_photography_day_event.php).

**June 21-27:** National Pollinators Week. For more information: [www.pollinator.org/pollinator\\_week\\_2010.htm](http://www.pollinator.org/pollinator_week_2010.htm).

**July 20:** Flat Out Catfish I, Pony Pasture, James River, Richmond.

**July 29 & 31, August 5, 7, & 10:** Flash Clinic: How to Use Your Camera's Flash, with Lynda Richardson at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Call (804) 262-9887 X322 or go to [www.lewisginter.org](http://www.lewisginter.org).

**August 13-15:** Virginia Outdoor Sportsman Show, Richmond; [www.sportsmanshow.com](http://www.sportsmanshow.com).

**August 20-22:** Mother-Daughter Outdoors Weekend, Holiday Lake 4-H Center, Appomattox.

**August 10:** Flat Out Catfish II, Pony Pasture, James River, Richmond.

**August 28:** Jakes Event; Page Valley Sportsman's Club; contact Art Kasson at (540) 622-6103 or [artkasson@yahoo.com](mailto:artkasson@yahoo.com).

**September 11-12:** Eastern Regional Big Game Contest, [www.vpsa.org](http://www.vpsa.org).

**September 25-26:** Western Regional Big Game Contest and State Championship, [www.iwla-rh.org](http://www.iwla-rh.org). □



## Building for Bluebirds

by Tom Teeples

It was 1970 and bluebirds were in decline; perhaps the nadir of *Sialia sialis* in U.S. history. Habitat was disappearing and competition from other cavity nesters was fierce. The bluebird was in trouble. In that same year, the first Audubon chapter in Virginia was formed on the Northern Neck. The Northern Neck Audubon Society (NNAS) got itself organized and stabilized and in 1975 established the "Bring Back Bluebirds to Virginia" campaign.

Bluebird nesting boxes were built and sold at local stores. That first year, 50 boxes were made and sold for \$3 each. When they sold out immediately, additional nesting boxes had to be built. The bluebird nesting box program is still going strong and NNAS has never looked back. In recent years, the chapter has constructed close to 1,000 boxes annually.

Box construction runs completely through volunteer effort. The building process has undergone many changes: work jigs are now used to hold box parts in place; automatic nailers are used. The original boxes were built in a member's garage. Now the boxes are made, assembly-line style, in the workshop of Albert Pollard, Sr. in White Stone.

NNAS is actively involved in the monitoring of three bluebird trails. Checked weekly throughout the breeding season, trail data are collected on the number of eggs, the number of young, and the number of young that successfully fledge. One trail has been monitored for the last four years; Belle Isle State Park is being monitored for the second year; and the Menokin trail has been added this year. Together, the three trails total more than 100 boxes! □

*Tom Teeples has been involved with Northern Neck Audubon since 1991, including two stints as president. He is a certified Virginia Master Naturalist.*

## Outdoor Kids



Eleven-year-old Harrison Turney with his first spring turkey killed on Youth Spring Turkey Hunting Day. The turkey sported a 10-inch beard and weighed 22 lbs. It was called in by his Papa, Bob Turney. Harrison also caught his first trout the same day.





The State Record Fish Committee of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has certified a new state record yellow perch caught by Mr. George L. Mullins of Haysi, Virginia. The 3-pound monster was caught on March 8th from Flannagan Reservoir, an unexpected location for this species. Yellow perch have never officially been stocked in Flannagan, and in fact, Mr. Mullins, who regularly fishes the lake, wasn't sure what he had at first for that very reason. This breaks the previous record of 2 pounds, 7 ounces that was caught from Lake Moomaw and had stood since 1999. For a complete list of the current State Record Freshwater Fish, visit the Department's website at [www.dgif.virginia.gov](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov).



by Beth Hester

***Life Along the Inner Coast: A Naturalist's Guide to the Sounds, Inlets, Rivers, and Intracoastal Waterways from Norfolk to Key West***

by Robert and Alice Jane Lippson  
2009  
University of North Carolina Press  
[www.uncpress.unc.edu](http://www.uncpress.unc.edu)  
800-848-6224

*"The Inner Coast is a place of discovery. In many areas there is an overwhelming feeling of remoteness, and yet it is close to many major cities."*

—Robert and Alice Lippson

Think of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) as the scenic by-way of the southeastern coastal plain. This fluid highway starts at the southernmost end of the Chesapeake Bay at

mile marker zero in Norfolk, flows down through the Dismal Swamp and Albemarle canals, and ends some 1,243 miles later in Key West, Florida.

Running parallel to the easternmost beaches and barrier islands of the Atlantic Coast, this system of rivers, sounds, marshes, lagoons, and varied backwaters supports some of the richest ecosystems on the planet. Though much of the ICW and surrounding waters are heavily developed and regularly navigated, it is still a kind of Route 66—a pilgrimage with plenty of hidden wonders waiting to be discovered.

Of course, every good highway needs a guide, and *Life Along the Inner Coast* is the perfect traveling companion. The authors are both marine scientists with years of experience studying and exploring both the Chesapeake Bay and the ICW. Their book documents well over 800 different species of flora and fauna, and the descriptions are accompanied by maps, by photographs, and by Alice Lippson's detailed line drawings.

Explore ferns that thrive on the floors of maritime forests; find out how the green heron fishes with 'found' tools; discover the 'cleaner' shrimp who wave around their delicate antennae to signal to passing fish that they are open for business. Finally, take advantage of the easy-to-use reference materials and charts located in the appendices.

What makes this book really special is its format. Every mammal and mollusk, bird, fish, wetland plant, insect, and crustacean are viewed within the context of the habitat in which they are found, from forested wetlands and intertidal flats to mangrove swamps and oyster reefs. Even the humble denizens of pilings and floating docks are not forgotten.

Because of its larger format, it's not a pocket guide of the type you'd keep in your backpack or glove box. But it is an excellent, and some might say essential, guide to understanding the plants and animals that call the ICW home. □



**Catch The Buzz:  
Celebrate the 4th Annual  
National Pollinator Week  
June 21–27, 2010**

by Beth Hester

With one out of every third bite of food we consume dependant on bees and other animals for reproduction, the future of agriculture flies on the wings of pollinators: bats, bees, birds and butterflies. Protecting these hardworking heroes is the impetus for National Pollinator Week. Last year, more than 30 state governors signed state proclamations promoting National Pollinator Week, and the goal for 2010 is to have celebrations take place in all 50 states.

The goal is to raise public awareness about the role pollinators play in the food chain, and the Pollinator Partnership is making certain promotional materials available to the public: posters, ring-tones, and educational literature. In 2009, National Pollinator Week events were held in Richmond, Arlington, Leesburg, Midlothian, and Chesterfield.

National Pollinator Week is a project of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign, which is managed by the Pollinator Partnership. For more information, and to find out about 2010 events nearby, visit: [www.pollinator.org/pollinator\\_week\\_2010.htm](http://www.pollinator.org/pollinator_week_2010.htm).

**Report Wildlife Violations  
1-800-237-5712**



# On The Water

by Tom Guess

## Low Head Dams

Let's imagine—it's one of those perfect weekend days with a slight breeze in the air. You catch a whiff of sweet honeysuckle and it has you longing to hit the river in your kayak.

You put on your life jacket and make sure everything is in order before sliding your boat in the water and heading downstream to scope things out. It isn't long before you find a spot that seems to be great for fishing. So you drift down the river a bit and just let the current pull you, lazily, as you wet a line and catch a few fish. You're thinking to yourself that it couldn't get much better than this. But what you don't realize is that it could get much worse!

As you continue drifting downstream you suddenly realize that you are approaching a point in the water that looks like a small step or ripple all the way across the river. You secure your fishing pole on your kayak and turn it around to continue downstream to resume fishing. You don't know that you are about to cross a low head dam. What should you do? *Stay away!!*

Low head dams are deceptively dangerous and merit the name given to them, "drowning machines." Virginia has several of these killers on rivers throughout the state. Over the years, powerboats, canoes, kayaks, and swimmers have all fallen victim to them.

Low head dams may range from a 25' drop-off to a mere 6" drop-off. Some dams are very wide and others, not wide at all. Interestingly, the characteristics of moving water are the same—regardless of the dam's size. And therein lies the rub: Most people associate danger with a dam having a significant drop-off and fast-flowing water, but fail to realize the danger is just as great with a 2' or 3' dam face and moderate water flow. The dam design, depth, volume and water velocity combine to determine the risk to boaters.

Danger lurks both above and below the structure. Water that is flowing over a drop forms a hole, or hydraulic, at the base which can trap objects washing over the drop. Backwash, or re-circulating current, is formed below the dam. Once swept over the top, a victim becomes trapped and is forced under water, pushed away from the dam, and then circulated to the top. The circulating motion (called a boil) then repeats this cycle over and over, as the individual is drawn back against the base of the dam.

### Dangers to Boaters:

- Dams are difficult to spot from upstream and often are not marked by signs or buoys.
- Dam hydraulics are unpredictable.
- Dams can deceive even experienced boaters.
- The concrete walls at the side of the dam face block the exit route for individuals trying to escape.
- Areas immediately downstream also present risk as the water is flowing upstream.
- Rescuing trapped individuals is dangerous and often unsuccessful.

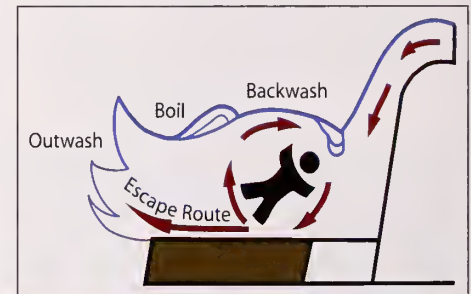
### Safety Tips to Follow:

- Scout the river and know the location of hazards. Talk with boaters who are familiar with the river to gain additional knowledge.
- Boat with experienced, responsible boaters and learn from them.
- Watch for a smooth horizon line where the water meets the sky. This indicates the potential presence of a dam.
- Look out for concrete retaining walls, which are part of the dam structure and easier to spot.
- Portage around all dams and when doing so, re-enter the river at a point well downstream of the boil.

It is nearly impossible to escape the strength of the hydraulic when trapped. The best thing to do if you are in this situation is tuck your chin down, draw your knees up to your chest, with arms wrapped around them. Hopefully, conditions will be such that the current will push you along the bed of the river until swept beyond the boil line and released by the hydraulic.

If attempting to rescue a trapped person, always wear a life jacket. Throw a line from shore to the person in danger. Untrained rescuers should never approach a hydraulic in a boat. Call for help if possible. □

Tom Guess, U. S. Coast Guard (Ret.), serves as a statewide coordinator for the Boating Safety Education Program at the DGIF.



Visuals and stats used with permission from Ohio DNR.

### CORRECTION

In the April 2010 column about boating safety, we omitted reporting that the BAC level was tightened to .08 in 1994 and zero tolerance for BUI was instituted in 1996. Also, the July 1, 2010 law for Personal Watercraft (PWC) mandates that all operators 35 and younger be required to complete a boating safety course.





by Ken and Maria Perrotte

## Catfish Court-Bouillon

**T**his dish is pronounced coo-be-yon and is a favorite in Louisiana where it is often prepared with redfish (small to medium-sized red drum). The first time Ken had a redfish court-bouillon was with fishing guide Theophile Bourgeois of Louisiana; later, J.P. Parsons of Alabama whipped up a delicious catfish version for some outdoor writers. With catfish being such a staple in Virginia and good eating size fish (less than 5 pounds) in abundance much of the year, an adaptation of both recipes seemed in order.

Most court-bouillon recipes start with a roux (for those who don't remember, this is an equal blend of fat and flour cooked to a consistency that can be stirred), but this one is thickened instead by the flour from the sautéed fish. The dish is actually more of a stew than the original version. A family friend who has enjoyed fried catfish his entire life tasted this dish and pronounced it "the best catfish I've ever eaten."

### Ingredients

- ¼ cup butter
- ½ cup chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped onion
- ½ cup finely chopped scallions (or green onions)
- ¼ cup chopped bell pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ teaspoon powdered thyme
- ¼ teaspoon marjoram
- ¼ teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon basil
- 1½ cups canned chopped tomatoes with their juice
- 1 tablespoon Creole seasoning (We've used *Tony Chachere'* and *Konrico*)
- ½ tablespoon paprika
- 2 cups chicken bouillon (or fish stock if you have it)
- 2 to 2 ½ pounds catfish fillets cut in chunks of about 2 or 3 inches

- Flour seasoned with salt and pepper
- 2 tablespoons oil
- ½ cup dry red wine
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Salt and cayenne pepper to taste

In a large pot, heat butter over medium heat and sauté celery, bell pepper, onion, scallions, and garlic. Stir in seasonings and tomatoes, and simmer 5 min. Stir in stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cook slowly for 30 min.

While cooking sauce, coat catfish with seasoned flour and sear on both sides in hot oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat. Then lower heat and continue cooking for a minute or two, at most, depending on the thickness of the fish.

When sauce has cooked approximately 30 min., stir in lemon juice and wine. Add fish and cook slowly 10–12 minutes more until fish is done. Season to taste and serve over white or brown rice.

Serves 4 or 5. You can make more by scaling the recipe up. Re-freeze cooked catfish court-bouillon for a few weeks if desired. Or, save a bag of catfish fillets and make this dish in the winter months for a nice fish alternative to some of the beef stews that are popular when the thermometer dips down.

Start things off with a nice salad of mixed greens and then serve the main course with some crusty French or garlic bread. Keep the Tabasco or other hot sauce close by for those who want to jazz things up a little. It makes for a satisfying meal.

This is one of those meals that pairs well with most lagers, pilsners, or ales and most white wines, except for those with floral nuances. A nice, well-chilled Chablis or Pinot Gris would offset the spiciness of the dish, and light red wines can also work. □



# Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

## Just Say "No" to Automatic - Part 3

**I**n the April column, I wrote about taking your camera off of automatic mode to give you more artistic freedom. After deciding which ISO to use, your next decision is based on what's more important: aperture (covered in May), or shutter speed. As a reminder, aperture controls depth-of-field, or how much is in focus in front of and behind the subject. Now I'm going to talk about the importance of shutter speed.

Having already selected your ISO, if you are out shooting and decide that you want to stop a bird in mid-flight or blur the water coming over a waterfall, it is shutter speed you will want to select next. Locate the shutter speeds on your camera. Speeds are measured by the amount of time that the shutter is open. As you might guess, the slower the shutter speed, the less you are able to stop action. The higher the shutter speed, the better control you have at stopping action.

If you are nervous about using manual settings at this point, just locate your camera's shutter priority mode. Here you can select the shutter speed you want, and the camera will select the aperture needed to make a good exposure.

One problem to be mindful of when shooting with slow shutter speeds is camera shake. This is particularly problematic when hand-holding your camera. A general "rule of thumb" is to never shoot a shutter speed that is slower than the length of the lens you are using. For example, when shooting with a 200mm lens don't attempt to hand-hold it at less than 1/200th of a second. (Remember, this is just a general rule!)

Some cameras have Image Stabilization (IS) or Vibration Reduction (VR) in the lens or camera itself. When turned on, this function can help you to hand-hold at up to two "stops" slower. I usually don't trust this completely, so be sure to check

for sharpness. And... when all else fails, use a tripod!

The next time you're out shooting, just say "NO!" to the automatic settings on your camera. Select your ISO, decide whether you're going to use aperture priority or shutter priority, and then shoot away. I suspect you will be much happier with the results. Eventually, you'll be able to move into full manual mode: a great goal to strive for.

HAPPY SHOOTING! □

You are invited to submit one to five of your best photographs to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send original slides, super high-quality prints, or high-res jpeg, tiff, or raw files on a disk and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where you captured the image and what camera and settings you used, along with your phone number. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work with our readers.

## Image of the Month

*Congratulations to Gilpin Brown of Richmond for his beautiful photographs of a great blue heron fishing next to a waterfall, illustrating the use of fast and slow shutter speeds. Way to go, Gilpin!*



*Using a shutter speed of 1/500th stopped the action of the waterfall for Gilpin. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XT<sub>i</sub>, ISO 200, 1/500th, f8.0.*



*A slow shutter speed of 1/10th smoothed out the water, making the heron stand out from the background. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XT<sub>i</sub>, ISO 200, 1/10th, f32.0.*



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## Watch and Listen For Boating Safety Announcements

Radio and television stations across  
Virginia are now broadcasting a 30-  
second public service announcement  
providing information on boating  
safety education requirements. Listen  
for the spot during the month of June.

Here's a link to the new television  
commercial on our website:  
[http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/boating/  
education/requirement/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/boating/education/requirement/)



For a free email subscription,  
visit our website at [www.HuntFishVA.com](http://www.HuntFishVA.com).  
Click on the Outdoor Report link and  
simply fill in the required information.



©John White

## Northern Pinesnake Watch

You can help conserve and protect the Northern pinesnake! The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries would like your assistance in reporting current, past, live or dead pinesnake observations. If you have seen a pinesnake or know of a past observation in the state, please fill out the form below and send it to the address provided. Your personal information will remain confidential. Thank you for helping us protect a natural rarity! Please include the following information in your observation:

Date observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation location (be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

County or City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Snake activity: ☐ moving ☐ resting ☐ dead ☐ other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

The below information will be used for confirmation purposes **only**.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information, such as photographs and/or location maps, is welcome and should be included when possible. Send the completed form to Mike Pinder, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 2206 South Main Street, Suite C, Blacksburg, VA 24060.

You can also respond via our new Web link, at:  
[www.dgif.virginia.gov/pinesnake](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/pinesnake)



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Outdoor Education Program  
presents

# Mother & Daughter *Outdoors*

August 20–22, 2010



This workshop is designed primarily for females 9 years of age and above to learn the outdoor skills usually associated with hunting and fishing, but useful in a variety of outdoor pursuits.

All courses focus on outdoor skills using hands-on instruction. Outdoor skills courses include outdoor cooking, fly-fishing, wild edibles, introduction to firearms, skeet shooting, archery, wilderness survival, map and compass, animal tracking, and more.

### This workshop is for you if:

- You would like to get your family involved in outdoor activities and need a place to start.
- You have never tried outdoor activities but have hoped for an opportunity to learn.
- You are a beginner who hopes to improve your skills.
- You are looking for the camaraderie of like-minded individuals.

This year's event will be held at Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center near Apomattox. Registration is \$90 per person, which includes meals, lodging, course instruction, use of equipment, and evening events. Registration deadline is July 23, 2010 at 5 p.m.

For more information, visit our website [www.dgif.virginia.gov/events](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/events) with links to registration forms for downloading or call the Outdoor Education Office at (804) 367-0656 or (804) 367-7800.